

CONSUMER GUIDE TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

Quality child care can make a big difference in the future of your child, your community, even the world. By choosing quality care now, you give your child a head start on a strong mind, body and spirit. And a better chance to become a more productive adult. So take your time in choosing child care. Compare your choices. And ask plenty of questions. Here are some general points about choosing quality child care. A good place to begin a serious search is with your local child care resource and referral agency. They know a lot about local choices, and they can save you a lot of time.*

Five Steps To Finding Quality Child Care:

- 1. Look B** Begin by visiting several child care homes or centers. On each visit, think about your first impression. But don't stop there. Does the place look safe for your child? Do the caregivers/teachers who will care for your child enjoy talking and playing with children? Do they talk with each child at the child's eye level? Are there plenty of toys and learning materials within a child's reach? You should always visit a home or center more than once. And stay as long as possible so you can get a good feel for what the care will be like for your child. Even after you start using the child care, continue to come back and check it out.
- 2. Listen B** What does the child care setting sound like? Do the children sound happy and involved? What about the teachers' voices? Do they seem cheerful and patient? A place that's too quiet may mean not enough activity. A place that's too noisy may mean there is a lack of control.
- 3. Count B** Count the number of children in the group. Then count the number of staff members caring for them. Obviously, the fewer the number of children for each adult, the more attention your child will get. A small number of children per adult is most important for babies and younger children.
- 4. Ask B** The knowledge and experience of the adults caring for your child are very important. Find out about the special training they each have. Ask about the background and experience of all staff: caregivers, teachers and the program director. Ask the same questions about any other adults who will have contact with your child in the home or center. Quality caregivers/teachers will be happy to have you ask these questions.
- 5. Be Informed B** Find out more about efforts in your community to improve the quality of child care. Is your caregiver involved in these activities? Has your child's caregiver achieved accreditation or completed training that exceeds minimum requirements? For more information, contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.*

Check It Out!

The following points are good ways to measure the quality of a child care home or center. For more information contact your local child care resource and referral agency. While visiting a home or center, ask yourself the following questions:

Caregivers/Teachers

- ☐ Do the caregivers/teachers seem to really like children?
- ☐ Do the caregivers/teachers get down on each child's level to speak to the child?
- ☐ Are children greeted when they arrive?
- ☐ Are children's needs quickly met even when things get busy?
- ☐ Are the caregivers/teachers trained in CPR, first aid and early childhood education?
- ☐ Are the caregivers/teachers involved in continuing education programs?
- ☐ Does the program keep up with children's changing interests?
- ☐ Will the caregivers/teachers always be ready to answer your questions?
- ☐ Will the caregivers/teachers tell you what your child is doing every day?
- ☐ Are parents' ideas welcomed? Are there ways for you to get involved?
- ☐ Do the caregivers/teachers and children enjoy being together?
- ☐ Is there enough staff to serve the children? (Ask local experts about the best staff/child ratios for different age groups.)
- ☐ Are caregivers/teachers trained and experienced?
- ☐ Have they participated in early childhood development classes?

Setting

- ☐ Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?
- ☐ Is there a fenced-in outdoor play area with a variety of safe equipment? Can the caregivers/teachers see the entire playground at all times?
- ☐ Are there different areas for resting, quiet play and active play?
Is there enough space for the children in all of these areas?

Activities

- ☐ Is there a daily balance of play time, story time, activity time and nap time?
- ☐ Are the activities right for each age group?
- ☐ Are there enough toys and learning materials for the number of children?
- ☐ Are toys clean, safe and within reach of the children?

In general

- ☐ Do you agree with the discipline practices?
- ☐ Do you hear the sounds of happy children?
- ☐ Are children comforted when needed?
- ☐ Is the program licensed or regulated?

- ☐ Are surprise visits by parents encouraged?
- ☐ Will your child be happy here?

*Utah Resource and Referral Agencies numbers are listed below:

Bridgerland

Box Elder, Cache, & Rich Counties
1-800-6701552

Northern Region

Weber, Morgan & Davis Counties
1-888-970-0101

Metro

Salt Lake & Tooele Counties
1-800-839-7444

Mountainland

Utah, Wasatch & Summit Counties
1-800-952-8220

Western Region

Juab, Piute, Wayne, Millard, Sanpete, Sevier, Iron, Washington, Kane, Garfield & Beaver Counties
1-800-543-7527

Eastern Region

Daggett, Duchesne, Uintah, Carbon, Emery, Grand & San Juan Counties
1-888-637-4786